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Camping permit system to begin this season at Ruby-Horsethief

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – A new camping permit system will begin this May for the Ruby-Horsethief stretch of the Colorado River to better manage the increasing use of this popular area between Loma, Colo. and Westwater, Utah.

Beginning this year, permits will be required to camp on this stretch of river from May 1 to Sept. 30. Camping is only allowed in 35 designated sites, and a permit system will require boaters to reserve a campsite before they depart.

“We’ve had a tremendous growth in the use of this stretch of river in the past 10 years,” said Katie Stevens, Manager of the BLM’s McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area, which manages this section of the Colorado River. “We worked closely with private boaters and outfitters over several years to develop this permit system – and to identify and improve an additional four new campsites that are available for the first time this year. This summer, we’ll complete three additional sites, for a total of 35 sites.”

For the 2012 season, the permits will be issued with no fee. Beginning in 2013, a fee based on group size will likely be charged for the camping permits.

Camping permits for Friday and Saturday nights will be issued by the Grand Junction Field Office by phone or in-person Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to noon. The camping permits will be available on a first come, first served basis beginning the Monday 60 days before the weekend of use. Permits will be issued to a trip leader and an alternate trip leader. Permits will be non-refundable but could be transferred to another trip leader.

“We may develop an on-line permit system for future seasons,” Stevens said. “For now, look to our website for key permitting information, such as a weekend permit availability calendar.”

Camping permits would be self-issued at the Loma boat launch for Sunday through Thursday overnight use.

A permit is also required for day-use of Ruby Horsethief. These permits will help BLM track use of the area. They are unlimited and free, and they will not be part of the fee system planned to begin in 2013.

More than 9,500 visitors registered at the Loma boat launch, and more than 20,000 nights of camping were recorded along the Ruby-Horsethief stretch in 2010.

Specific details about the the permit system are available by logging onto <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/mcnca/recreation/Boating.html>, by emailing rbyhorsethief@blm.gov, or by calling 970 244-3000.

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